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ABSTRACT

Strategies that the corporate world can use to create education alliances with schools are described in this report. It is argued that businesses must develop education partnerships with the same degree of strategic thinking used to advance any business objective or new product. These strategies are aligned with three fundamental benchmarks for measuring student progress: students should be able to read well and independently by the end of third grade; students should study algebra by the end of eighth grade and continue to take advanced math and science; and students should see college as an option and be prepared for education beyond high school. Ways in which these benchmarks can be reached include providing a safe haven for students after school, connecting classrooms to the Internet, training teachers in the use of technology, and involving parents in their children's education. Business owners should remember that business-education partnerships can take on many different forms; by examining the goals of both the business and the education partner, partnerships can have lasting effects on student achievement and business success. The document concludes with a four-stage plan for action to begin an active business-education partnership. (RJM)

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THE CORPORATE IMPERATIVE:

RESULTS AND BENEFITS OF BUSINESS INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION

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EA 029 341

PARTNERSHIP for Family Involvement in Education

THE CORPORATE IMPERATIVE

RESULTS AND BENEFITS OF BUSINESS INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION

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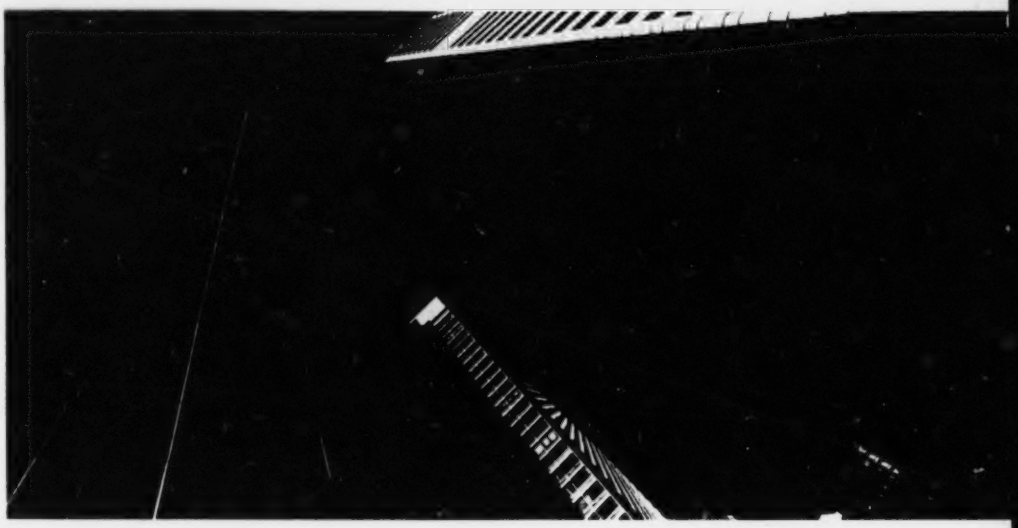
THE CORPORATE IMPERATIVE:

RESULTS AND BENEFITS OF BUSINESS INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION

- **Businesses can create strategic education alliances that meet business objectives and promote systemic education change.**
- **Businesses must develop education partnerships with the same degree of strategic thinking used to advance any business objective or new product.**

"We're talking about the future of our nation. Economic prosperity for all our citizens is an empty and cynical dream unless we provide the necessary education to all students. Perhaps more ominously, no democracy can survive without an educated citizenry."
— Lou Gerstner, Chairman and CEO, IBM

Research shows that continued corporate prosperity depends on major education change to maintain a highly qualified, competitive workforce. What new employees need to know today is very different from what employees used to need to know to be successful. Developments in technology and the world economy have changed the needs of employers for a well-developed, trained, and educated workforce. As a consequence, corporations have a tremendous stake in making education reform become a reality.



Well-educated employees:

- **Have solid basic skills**
- **Feel comfortable working in a team environment**
- **Can "hit the ground running" and search for creative solutions to problems**

Businesses can play a key role in ensuring that all students receive a high-quality, world-class education. Business-education partnerships can save corporations millions of dollars in future training costs and help students be more prepared when they enter the workplace environment. Employers can also benefit by assisting parent employees to help their children learn. A 1998 Families and Work Institute study found that employers who are family friendly have employees who are more satisfied with their jobs, more committed to their employers, and more productive at work. In addition, according to Money magazine, the quality of local schools is one of the most important criteria considered by potential employees when deciding whether to accept a job offer in a different city. With such a vested interest in the quality of education, corporate leaders are uniquely positioned to meet this challenge and provide the catalyst for systemic education improvements.

Raising the Bar

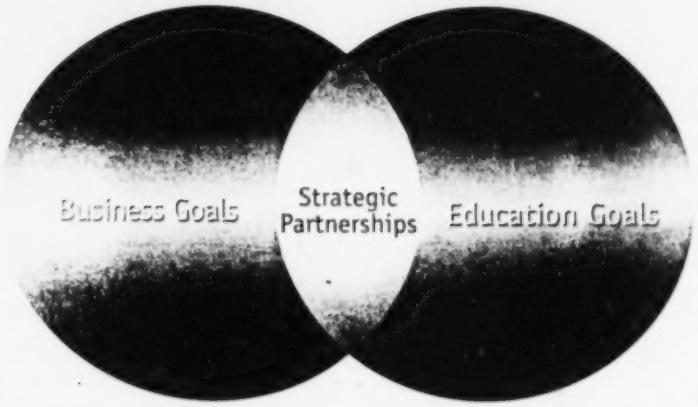
Corporate-sponsored education initiatives provide tremendous benefits to communities, businesses, schools, and employees. Traditionally, company efforts have been directed toward activities such as providing one-time resources and materials to schools. However, to make significant, long-term improvements that benefit both the business and the school system, businesses must develop their education partnerships with the same degree of strategic thinking used to advance any new business objective or product. Businesses can often reap even greater benefits by partnering with other businesses and community organizations. Companies, especially small businesses, in many communities are working together to make resources go even further to help schools, and coalitions of businesses coming together around a specific education issue can often play a leadership role in coordinating many business-education partnerships.

"Corporate America has the power to improve the education of today's youth by enabling employees to participate in school-related activities during the school/work day."
— Jill Barad, Chairman and CEO, Mattel Company

Companies must strive for integrated, strategic partnerships that:

- Reflect core business objectives and organizational philosophy;
- Align with the mission of schools, districts, and states to promote systemic educational change; and
- Strengthen the core of education at critical transition points of leverage and opportunity.

Integrated and Strategic Business-Education Partnerships



Strategies for Improving Education

There are four major ways that employers can approach educational improvement. Businesses can:

- Initiate and develop partnerships with schools and their employees;
- Lead education partnerships with many businesses, community organizations, and schools;
- Implement company policies and programs that promote involvement of working parents and other employees in education; and
- Contribute resources to schools and the partnership process, including such business expertise as accounting, financial management, and leadership and management development.

A Base for Vigorous Business-Education Partnerships

A new American consensus on education has developed around what is needed to prepare our young people for the future. Widely accepted and applied by national policy makers and practitioners, the following checkpoints of student progress stem from research that identifies certain points of student growth as critical transition periods.

These benchmarks lend themselves to vigorous business-education partnerships.

- Students should be able to read well and independently by the end of third grade.
- Students should study algebra by the end of eighth grade and continue to take advanced math and science throughout high school.
- Students should see college as an option and be prepared for some training or education past high school.

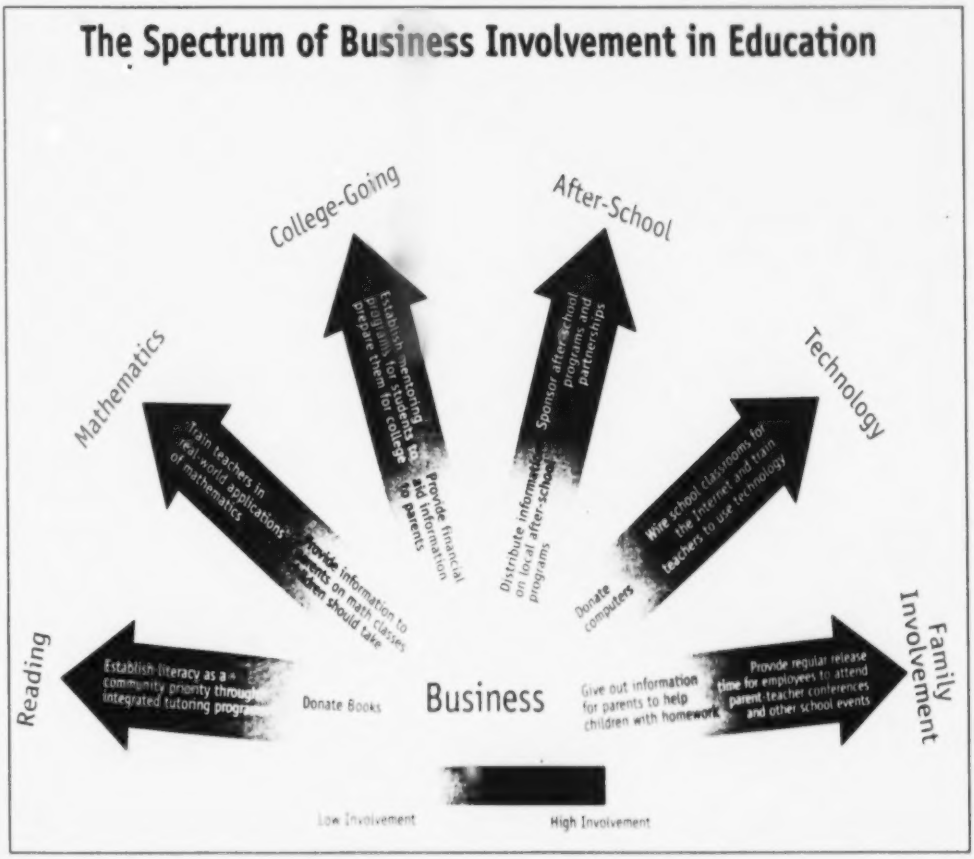
"No issue is more fundamental to America's future and our quality of life than education. Businesses must play a vital role in helping our students to develop the skills they will need to succeed in the 21st century."
— Arthur F. Ryan, Chairman and CEO, Prudential

These benchmarks can be leveraged by three key areas:

- Students should have a safe haven to go to after school where enrichment and learning takes place.
- Classrooms should be connected to the Internet and all teachers should be well-trained in using technology.
- Parents should be involved in their children's education in school, at home, and in the community.

Researchers have discovered that businesses typically go through phases as they become involved in partnerships. Companies often move from a narrow and somewhat connected involvement to a more integrated, systemic partnership. The diagram below illustrates the partnership cycle that business-education partnerships tend to go through, highlighting activities that further these agreed-upon education benchmarks.

Many businesses around the country are involved in more integrated, systemic education partnerships, represented at the end of the partnership continuum. These types of partnerships work to meet the goals of the business involved, as well as integrate the missions of the education system. The following examples describe how various businesses have teamed up to focus their efforts more effectively on improving education.



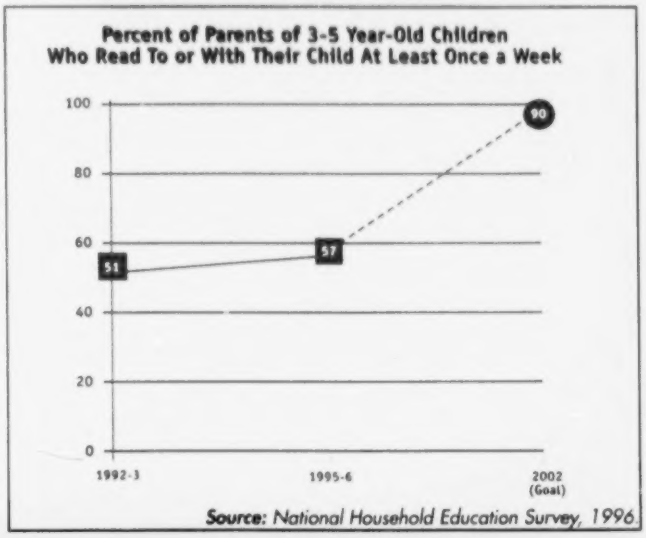
READING: STUDENTS SHOULD BE ABLE TO READ WELL AND INDEPENDENTLY BY THE END OF THIRD GRADE.

Elementary school children read all summer long and beyond thanks to the Fox Cities Alliance for Education, an initiative of the **Fox Cities Chamber of Commerce and Industry** located in Appleton, Wisconsin. Local employers have rallied around local schools to promote READ*WRITE*NOW!, a reading and writing program of the Partnership for Family Involvement in Education and the America Reads Challenge. Fox Cities employers and employees developed a plan for partners to read to students during the summer and into the school year. Employers also donate paper and supplies and reproduced the printed materials for the program at no cost. By working together as a consortium, the local businesses are able to make resources go further to help improve students' reading achievement. Thousands of reading kits have been distributed to students in the Fox Cities area since 1995. Evaluations of the effects of the program on children's reading have shown that not only did students not lose reading skills over the summer, as often happens with low-income children, but that almost 80 percent of student achievement scores increased as a result of the program. Parents also reported that they spent more time reading with their children and felt that the materials were helpful.

Benefits

- **Business:** Helps develop the reading skills young children need to be successful in school and careers
- **School:** Profits from a systemic partnership where reading is embedded in business practices and reinforced in the community as a priority
- **Teacher:** Begins the school year teaching new material, rather than reviewing the past year's material

Businesses can help parents lay the foundation for future academic success



Source: *National Household Education Survey, 1996*

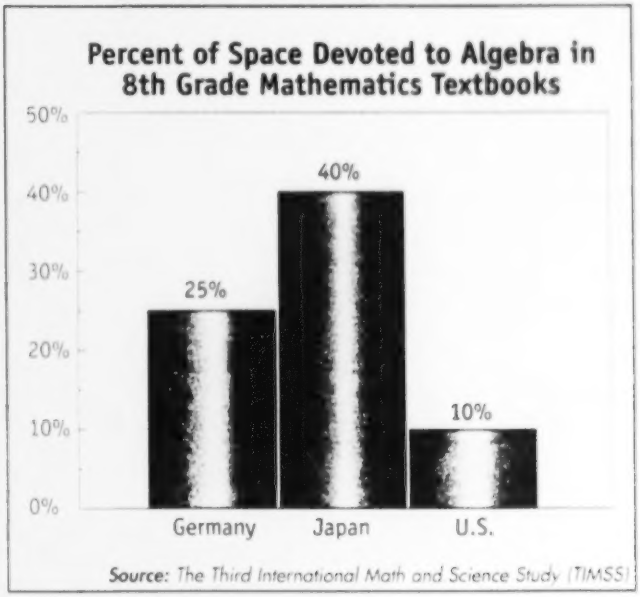
MATHEMATICS: STUDENTS SHOULD STUDY ALGEBRA BY THE END OF EIGHTH GRADE AND CONTINUE TO TAKE ADVANCED MATH AND SCIENCE THROUGHOUT HIGH SCHOOL.

John Hancock Financial Services developed the Financial Wizards program with the Mason Elementary School. This program evolved from an adopt-a-class program into a unique, interactive curriculum covering math and financial concepts. With the goal of making math real and comprehensible for students and helping textbook material, such as algebra and accounting, come to life, Financial Wizards has matched the school's needs with Hancock's expertise by organizing a cadre of actuaries that contribute "brain power" to the Mason school by serving as mathematics tutors. With this intensive math mentoring, Mason school children will be much better prepared to study algebra by the eighth grade.

"Our 'Wizards' effort really represents the idea that company/school relationships go way beyond the typical provider of resources. Here we found a synergy with a group of individuals who have expertise, and – more important – a love for the art of mathematics, and matched them with the teachers and the students to create a new and innovative way of the business world helping children."

— Steve Brown, Chairman and CEO, John Hancock

Businesses have a role in helping to provide a world-class education



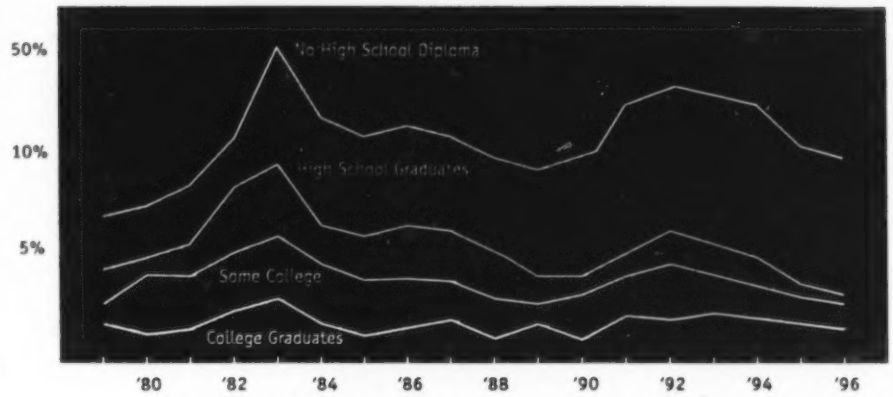
Benefits

- **Business:** Builds student achievement and interest in mathematics including algebra, and a better prepared workforce for the next century
- **School:** Increases student understanding, appreciation, and test performance in mathematics and prepares them for mastery of more advanced math
- **Teacher:** Understands more real-life examples of math usage and helps students be more enthusiastic about math

WELL-PREPARED FOR COLLEGE: STUDENTS SHOULD SEE COLLEGE AS AN OPTION AND BE PREPARED FOR SOME TRAINING OR EDUCATION PAST HIGH SCHOOL.

Businesses can help students stay on the right track and find jobs by preparing them for college

Unemployment Rates by Education Level



Source: *Getting Ready for College Early, U.S. Department of Education, 1997*

Working with ten inner-city high schools, the **Shell Oil Company** is partnering with the Los Angeles Unified School District to help students graduate from high school, continue on to college, and gain valuable career skills. Students participate in an 80-hour after-school program that covers such topics as job searching and interviewing, career planning, computer training, and effective communication. Students receive school credit for this classroom-based program. At the completion of the classroom component, students are placed into paid after-school jobs sponsored by a network of local businesses. Student salaries are paid half by the local business and half by Shell. Employers also commit to serve as mentors for the students and advise on career planning. Over 900 students have participated in this program, with over 80 percent continuing onto college after high school. Shell has expanded the program to Chicago and Houston, and hopes to continue to work in additional cities in the coming years.

Benefits

- **Business:** Ensures a college-educated workforce by working with students who may not have continued past high school
- **School:** Reduces high school dropout rate and increases achievement scores and number of students continuing on to college – all indicators of school success
- **Teacher:** Teaches to students who are better prepared and motivated to continue onto college

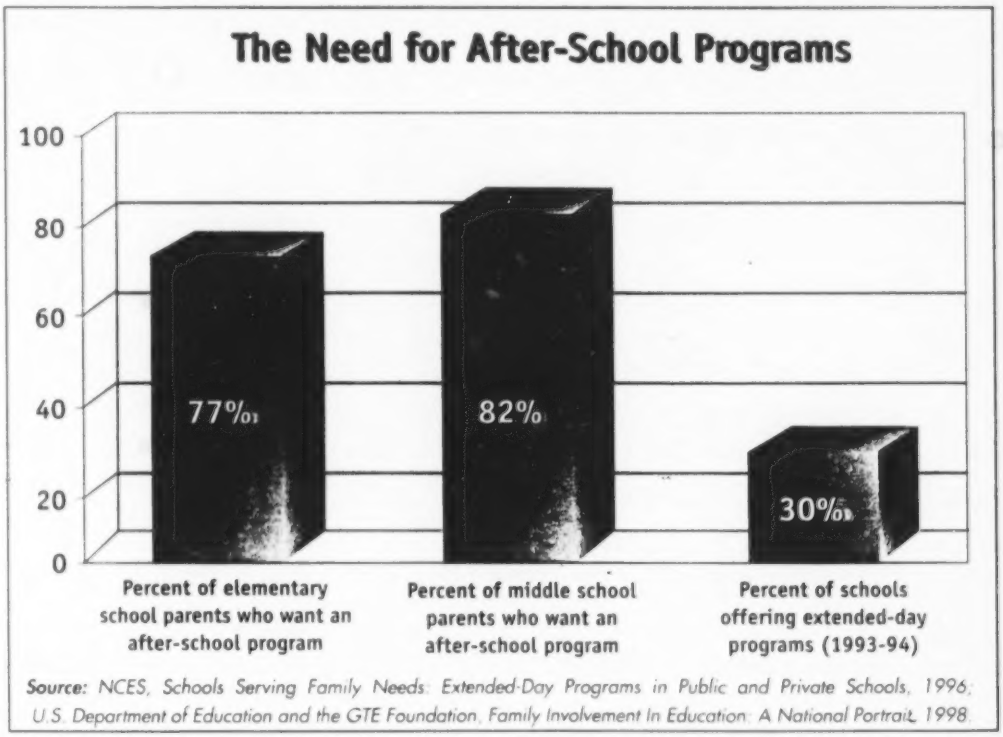
AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS: STUDENTS SHOULD HAVE A SAFE HAVEN TO GO TO AFTER-SCHOOL WHERE ENRICHMENT AND LEARNING TAKES PLACE.

The American Business Collaboration, an alliance of 22 of the country's largest corporations, supports many different kinds of activities, including a number of innovative projects and activities to ensure that school-age children have productive, safe, and interesting ways to spend time outside of school. The Collaboration provides start-up funding to groups such as the Y.M.C.A. to launch after-school programs that serve children of contributing companies' employees as well as other children in the community. Through the support of the Collaboration, many schools and community groups have expanded their after-school programs to operate before school as well. Business leaders in the Collaboration have also held forums with school leaders to discuss the need for after-school programs and the resources available and hosted a summer program for after-school program leaders on how they can incorporate and use science and technology in after-school activities.

Benefits

- **Business:** Commits to keeping children safe after school and improves the skills of future workforce
- **School:** Increases student achievement and gains support for after-school activities
- **Teacher:** Gains better-prepared, more academically focused students

Businesses can help allay parents' safety concerns by sponsoring after-school programs that help children learn



Source: NCES, Schools Serving Family Needs: Extended-Day Programs in Public and Private Schools, 1996; U.S. Department of Education and the GTE Foundation, Family Involvement In Education: A National Portrait, 1998

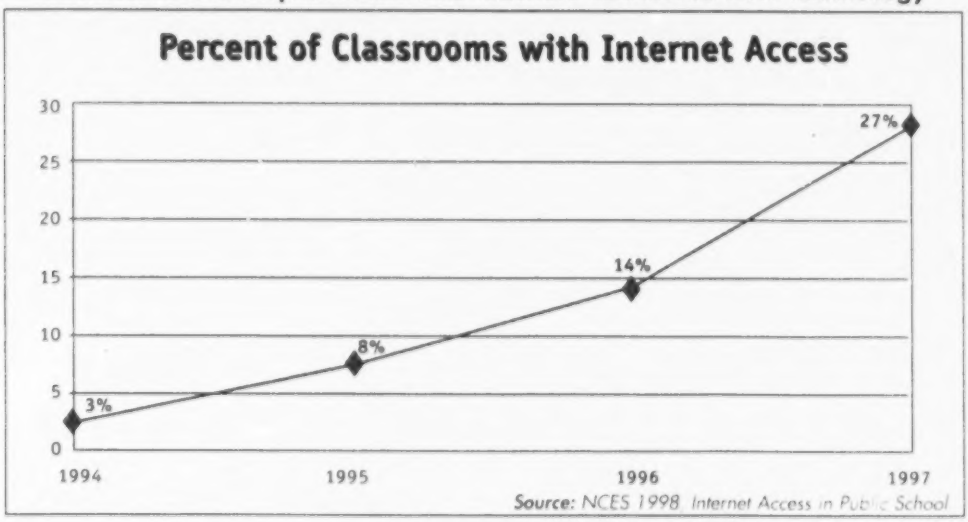
TECHNOLOGY: CLASSROOMS SHOULD BE CONNECTED TO THE INTERNET AND ALL TEACHERS SHOULD BE WELL-TRAINED IN USING TECHNOLOGY.

As schools and classrooms become more wired, teachers are faced with the daunting task of what to do with technology and how to integrate it effectively into classroom activities. The **AT&T** Learning Network is a $150 million effort to link families, teachers, and schools to the technology tools and support they need. The Learning Network provides such resources as web-based information for teachers and parents on education issues, an online mentoring program for teachers on integrating technology into the classroom, and local grants from the AT&T Foundation to support professional development and family involvement in education. In addition, AT&T has partnered with the **FamilyEducation Company** to offer customized family involvement websites to every public and private school in the state of Maryland. Starting in 1997, over 40 percent of Maryland's 24 school districts have taken advantage of this cost-free program, enabling schools to reach out more effectively to parents.

Benefits

- **Business:** Helps build a better educated and technologically proficient teaching force that can better prepare tomorrow's workers, and more actively engages families with their children's education
- **School:** Strengthens student and teacher skills in working with technology and increases parent involvement
- **Teacher:** Increases knowledge about working with computers in the classroom and improves connections to parents and other teachers

Businesses can help students and teachers connect to new technology



"I believe that family involvement is the key to student success and that is why I'm so proud that FamilyEducation Network and AT&T have chosen Maryland to showcase this educational model. This innovative project is an important link to tie our schools with the local community through information technology."
— Maryland Governor Parris Glendening

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT: PARENTS SHOULD BE INVOLVED IN THEIR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION IN SCHOOL, AT HOME, AND IN THE COMMUNITY.

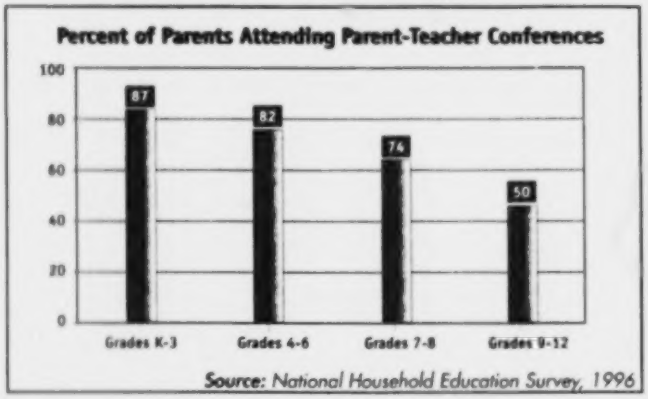
Recognizing that employees' schedules can make it difficult to keep in contact with their children during the school day, **Hewlett-Packard** has teamed up with the Santa Rosa City (California) School District to establish the first work-site public school on the West Coast. One of over 30 such "satellite learning centers" in the United States, the Hidden Valley Satellite School is an elementary school located on the grounds of Hewlett-Packard's plant. More than 75 percent of the students' parents are company employees. Parents are able to visit and eat lunch with their children as well as volunteer during the school day. Employee turnover at Hewlett-Packard is at least 50 percent lower for workers with children enrolled in the school than those whose children are not. Teachers also report much higher levels of family involvement than they have seen at other schools – especially among fathers – student attendance is high, and student reading scores are about 43 percent higher than those of other local public school kids.

Benefits

- **Business:** Increases employee productivity and retention by decreasing parental concerns about children due to proximity of school
- **School:** Improves student achievement through increased parent involvement
- **Teacher:** Expands familiarity with students' parents and improves student learning through more family involvement

"[We pledge] to adopt policies to support parental involvement in their children's education and in improving their local schools."
— Resolution of CEOs at 1996 National Education Summit, Palisades, New York

Businesses can help parents stay more involved as children get older



Source: National Household Education Survey, 1996

Based at the Institute for Educational Leadership, Hand in Hand: Parents, Schools and Communities United for Kids has established collaboratives in eight cities across the country to implement practical activities and programs which promote parent involvement. Sponsored by the **Mattel** Foundation, each of the eight cities participates in "Take Our Parents to School Week" to showcase the accomplishments of each unique city and detail how parents, children, educators, businesses, and community members interact in new ways to promote parent involvement. The Mattel Company also has an employee leave program which offers each employee 16 hours per year of paid leave for educational involvement.

Benefits

- **Business:** Jumpstarts local partnership-building efforts to connect families and schools to improve local education systems that graduate young people prepared for college and careers.
- **School:** Participates in active local consortia bringing together a multitude of resources around school improvement for a systemic partnership.
- **Teacher:** Receives benefits of more involved corporate employees, parents, and community members.

Critical Points to Remember

It is in the best interests of the business community to help improve education. Companies' different visions of strategic education alliances reflect their unique business values and the priorities of their education systems. Business-education partnerships can take on many different forms around a variety of issues. But by carefully examining the goals of both the business and the education partner, and focusing on one or more of the critical areas in education, partnerships can have lasting effects on student achievement and – ultimately – business success.

Next Steps: A Four-Stage Plan for Action to Begin an Active Business-Education Partnership

Stage 1: Vision

- Visualize how your company can achieve sustained educational change
- Articulate your vision and its relevance to business and educational goals
- Create awareness and commitment to your vision among employees and the community

Stage 2: Leadership

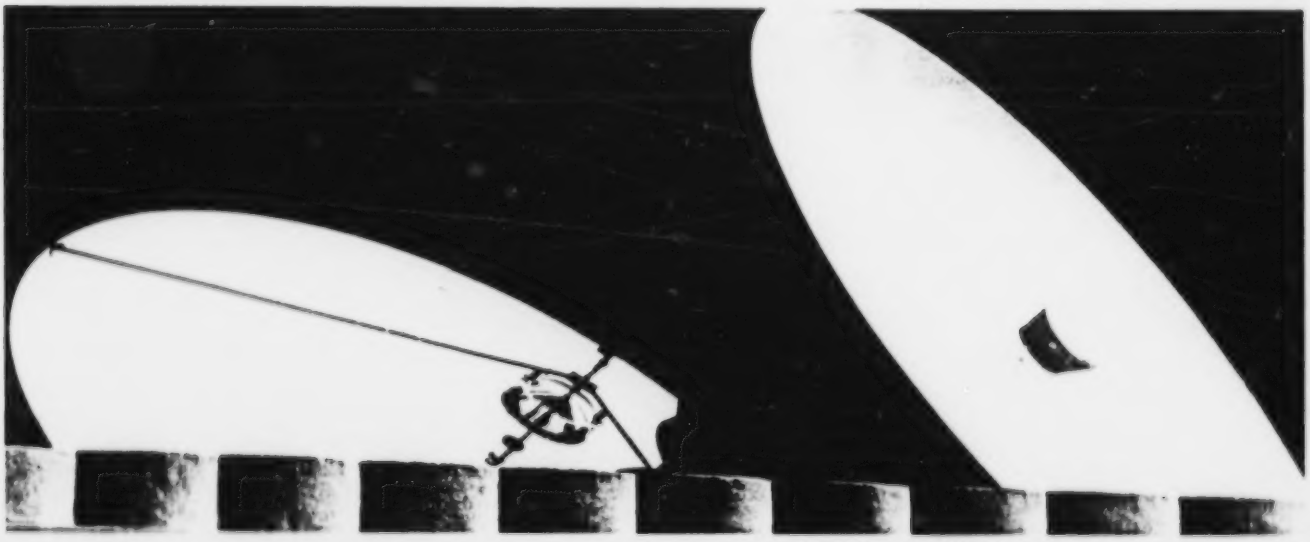
- Create buy-in and develop linkages with key stakeholder groups (internal company departments and parent/school/community groups)
- Identify "champions" within your company who can take a leadership role in advancing your vision
- Reduce barriers and obstacles which may inhibit implementing the vision

Stage 3: Measurable indicators

- Determine what you plan to accomplish, clarifying your goals and indicators of success (for example, rates of absenteeism, productivity, recruitment, retention, and/or customer loyalty)
- Measure the results at your company and at schools
- Develop a timetable to evaluate the achievement of your goals and successes

Stage 4: Continuous improvement

- Evaluate the impact of your educational partnerships
- Plan next steps
- Continue to assess and revise your efforts
- Build and strengthen local networks



The Partnership for Family Involvement in Education

Designed to promote family, employer, and community involvement in education, this nationwide effort seeks to encourage linkages between schools, families, and workplaces in order to stimulate and support improvements in schools throughout America. With more than 4,200 members, the Partnership is now entering its fourth year and invites anyone who is interested in supporting family and community involvement in education to join. Find out more about the Partnership by calling the U.S. Department of Education at 1 800 USA LEARN, or visit www.ed.gov/pfie.